Ayurvedic Perspective of Hypothyroidism w. s. r to Dhatawagnimandya: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract: The fast growing lifestyle and work culture has made human life sedentary and technology dependent, which in turns makes human lazy and physically inactive. This sedentary and stressful lifestyle has led to various metabolic diseases i. e. lifestyle disorders such as Hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus etc. It’s been observed that students and new generation of Ayurveda are facing difficulties in managing and understanding these diseases by Ayurveda perspective, as these diseases are not mentioned as by their names. Hypothyroidism is also one of them which is more prevalent now a days. Hence to give it an Ayurveda background in relation to its physio-pathology understanding this paper will help in this regard.

Keywords: Hypothyroidism, jatharagni, bhutagni, dhatwagni, dhatawagnimandya, kapha dosha, Ayurveda, med dhatu, dhatu dushiti, ras dhatu, hyp metabolism

1. Introduction

In this era of growth and development where the world is experiencing an exponential boom in both science and technology, at the same time human’s way of unhealthy living has led to enduring various lifestyle disorders. Hormonal disorders being one of the most prevalent diseases of today’s era is becoming a significant public health issue. According to various studies done in this field approximately 42 million people suffer from various thyroid disorders. The prevalence of Hypothyroidism is very high as it observed that one among 10 people suffer from hypothyroidism in India. Thyroid disorders is not only a burden on Indian health system but it is also becoming a serious health issue worldwide.

Ayurveda being the most ancient and scientific system of healthcare expounded various measures that will be helpful in dealing with such kind of lifestyle related health issues. As this modern age disease is a result of various lifestyle changes this can be corrected when we bring back the lost holistic approach of living. In the terms of modern system of medicine hypothyroidism is caused due to insufficiency and imbalance of T3, T4, TSH hormones, and one who suffers from thyroid disorders needs to be on hormonal therapy for lifelong, but no significant relief from symptoms can be seen even taking medicine along with that hormonal therapy comes along with some unavoidable side effects. So there is a great need to find out a better and safer treatment from the hidden treasure of Ayurveda treatise to deal with various hormonal disorders.

As there is no direct correlation of hypothyroidism with any disease in ayurveda, still we can manage the disease on the the symptoms and ruling out the dosha and the cause involved. As Acharya charak expounded physician should never be ashamed if he can’t name that disease, rather he should focus on the underlying hetus, lakshanas and treat accordingly by planning aushadha In accordance with the hetus and lakshanas. When we go inside the pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism we perceive that it’s a metabolic disorder and we can compare it with the vitiation of agni according to Ayurveda classics. As acharya expounds that for all the metabolic activities happening in the body is due to proper functioning of agni and any vitiation in its functioning will lead to various diseases.

2. Review Literature

Acharya charak in vatkalakaliyaidhyay of sutrasthan reflected agni in concept of pitta. From the point of view of Ayurveda, pitta has been described as agni (fire)\(^1\), since it performs fire-like actions i. e. paka, which refers to pacana (digestion); dahana (burning, combustion or oxidation) including bhinnasamghata (splitting); tapana (heat production), parinamana (conversion), parāvr̥ti (transformation), prakāsana (illumination), ranjana or varnakāra (colouration) and prabhākara (to cause lustre)\(^2\).

A careful study of the existing editions of ancient Ayurvedic classics and allied literature shows that pitta performs functions similar to those of agni\(^3\). The concept of agni of Ayurveda, which refers to the manifold functions ascribed to pitta is at once comprehensive. It not only includes chemical agencies responsible for aharapacana in the koṣṭha (corresponding to gastro-intestinal digestion), which leads to separation of sarabhaga (nutrient fraction) of the ahāra (food) from the kiṭṭabhaga (the indigestible or undigested residue of the food) but also metabolic events energy, synthesis and maintenance metabolism. In addition, it is seen to comprehend photo and chemo synthetic processes. Pacakapitta known variously as jāṭharagani, kośhāgni, antaragani, pacakāgni and dehāgni etc.; while being located in its own place in an area between amāśaya and pakvāśaya,

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It would be seen from the foregoing that the Ayurvedic concept of agni includes, not only five kinds of pittas but also the dhatvagnis and bhutagnis. It is clear from the classical Ayurvedic texts that the enumeration of the number of agni’s (which include pitta) varies from author to author. Accor ding to Caraka Samhita, read together with its main commentary by Cakrapāṇi Datta, the number of agnis enumerated are over 13 as shown below jatharagni 1, bhutagni 5, dhatvagni 6.

2 On the other hand, Suśruta is seen to have described only five agnis viz. Pacakāgni, ranjakāgni, alocakāgni, sadhakāgni and bhrajakāgni. There is however an indirect reference in Susruta Samhita to five bhūtāgnis, in the brief description made to the transformation, which foodstuffs undergo in the organism. When these five agnis are taken into consideration, the total number of agnis according to Suśruta would be ten. Vāgbhata is seen to have reckoned 5 pittas 5 bhutagni 7 dhatvagni 3doṣagni 3 mal agni in all twenty three agnis.

Of the more recent authorities, Sarngadhara is seen to have recognized five pittas only. On the other hand, Bhava Miśra is seen to have followed Charaka and Vāgbhata.

Pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism according to Ayurveda

Acharya vagbhat in ashtanghriyda cited

"Moieties of kāyāgni, which is located in its own place are distributed to and permeate through all the dhatus; a decrease of it makes for an increase of the dhatu, while an increase of it makes for the decrease of the dhatu." 3

The seven kinds of dhatvagnis obviously refer to substances which like enzymes catalyse the synthesis of seven kinds of nutrient substances, required for the use of the seven species of dhatu each agni, aiding the conversion of nutrient substances into what may permissibly be called "precursor substances" of the formed dhatu, already present in the body. This view is based upon references to poshaka or asthayidhatu and poshya or sthayidhatu, found mentioned in Cakrapāṇi’s commentary on Charakasamhita. Thus, the rasagāṇi would catalyse the conversion of appropriate substances and their incorporation into the rasāddhatu which latter serves as the vehicle of transport of the remaining poshaka or asthayidhatu. Similarly, catalysed materials obtained from ahara rasa are made available to corresponding sīhayi or poshyadhatus. It obvious that the term dhatvagni is a collective noun standing both for group specific and reaction specific enzymes. Even so, metabolic reactions envisaged above are not exclusively anabolic but this also comprise catabolic reactions, which yield waste products or kitta in the process. This view is implicit in the kijātpaka referred to by Cakrapāṇi Datta. 40 The outcome of kitāpaka, are discharged from the body at periodic intervals and the remaining parts are utilized for the production of a number of structures of the body, such as hair, nail etc.

The idea underlying the classical description of the behaviour of the pacakāṁsas in the dhatu, in the two circumstances stated above, can be illustrated with the example of the conditions described as atyagni known also as bhasmaka, and mandagni corresponding in modern parlance to hyper and hypo-metabolism respectively.

The hypometabolism (hypothyroidism) corresponding to mandagni can be illustrated with low thyroxin availability-thyroxin activates cellular oxidative processes throughout the body and an insufficiency of this hormone has been shown to be followed by a reduction in the oxidative reaction, the B. M. R. may fall to 25%. The other related symptoms of the condition are the development of myxodema which is characterised by a reduction of mental and bodily vigour, the loss of sex drive, loss of hair and an abnormal thickening of the skin as if much water has been accumulated in it (oedema); it leads to an increase of body weight, since less food is burnt in the cells and much of it is stored as fat.

Symptoms of Hypothyroidism according to Ayurveda

If we talk about symptomology of Hypothyroidism it is not mentioned exact by name in Ayurveda classics. As ayurveda deals with pathogenesis rather than naming any disease, hence by seeing the above pathogenesis of Hypothyroidism it involves main incident of dhatvagni Mandya and due to which the prominent dhatudusthi occurs mainly of rasdhatu and meddhatu. Shedding light on symptoms, we also perceive that along with the vitiation of rasdhatu and med dhatu, elevated kaphadoshais seen along with vitiated pitta and vaṭīdosa.

The clinical features of Hypothyroidism are fatigue, lethargy, cold intolerance, constipation, dry and coarse skin, puffy face, hair fall, depression, weight gain, irregular menstruation, infertility etc.

These clinical manifestations can be seen in correspondence to the disease caused due to vitiated rasa dhatu, symptoms such as ashraddha, aruchi, gaurava, angmarda, pandu, klaibya, angsaad and acharyacharakin grahamadihaya of charakchikitsa cited that the former dhatu is essential for the formation of latter dhatu, and any vitiation in the former results in the abnormalities of latter dhatu.

The disease caused due to med dhatudusti can also be seen in symptoms of hypothyroidism such shaihiyā, weakness, weight gain and some features of sukradusti such asklaihya, nachaasyajayategarbha that means unable to conceive,
some symptoms can be seen in correspondence to doshadusti such as weight gain, laxity of muscles, puffiness, constipation, cold intolerance, minimal sweating, hairfall can be observed in correspondence to doshadusti involved.

3. Discussion

Ayurveda defines a healthy state of body as

स्वस्थानस्थस्य कायमेंश: धातुपु: संस्थिता:।
तेषां सादातिदीर्घम्य: धातुवृद्धिविद्यमद्व:।

Here acharya expounded about both physical as well as mental health and states that, One who is established in Self, who has balanced doshas (primary life force), balanced agni (fire of digestion), properly formed dhatu (tissues), proper elimination of malas (waste products), well-functioning bodily processes, and whose mind, soul and senses are full of bliss is called a healthy person.

Ayurveda believes that the imbalance in digestive fire (Agni) is the root cause for most of the diseases. Ayurvedic experts analyse Agni not only as digestive fire, but energy behind all the metabolic processes of the body. This also refers to physical well-being.

As discussed earlier, due to unhealty food habits and lifestyle, jatharagni gets vitiated which ultimately vitiates the dhatuvagni. This vitiated agni will results in abnormal formation of the seven dhatu, firstly they will not be formed properly and if formed will be present in abnormal state. This hypo metabolism of agni being the main culprit will elevate kaphadosha along with vata and pitta and ultimately causes abnormalities in its functioning and lead to rasdhatusdusti and med dhatudoshti.

4. Conclusion

Hypothyroidism is a condition caused due to de escalated metabolism and when we see metabolic functioning in Ayurveda view point, we correlate it to the functioning of agni. And on the basis of pathogenesis and symptomology mentioned earlier one can easily correlate it with dhatuwagnimandya. In the same way treating according to hetus, doshas, lakshanas, dhatudushti rather than by naming any disease is the ideal way of management, as charak quoted very clearly that the whole mechanism of Ayurveda revolves around the tri sutra i. e. hetu, lakshan and aushadh. Hence it can be concluded that today’s hypothyroidism is nothing but vitiation of dhatwagni due to sedentary and disturbed lifestyle of people and in this way this paper will help in gaining the Ayurveda perspective of hypothyroidism in relation to its physio-pathology.

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